

Washington, DC – Wednesday, Congressman Harry Teague voted to reauthorize two successful and critically important firefighter assistance programs for the next five years. The Fire Grants Reauthorization Act ensures the continued funding of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFG) and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) program while incorporating needed changes and improvements to the two programs.

The bill allocates \$1 billion for the next five years to the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program, which provides funding to fire departments to purchase equipment, training, fire trucks and other resources. The legislation passed today adjusts the AFG program to assist all types of communities, from large cities to small towns, more equally by adjusting funding distribution. The Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) program, designed to help struggling fire departments hire additional firefighters, will receive \$1.194 billion for the fiscal year 2010 – 2014. This program, aimed at job promotion and retention, provides three year grants for new hires across the country.

“Our local fire departments need our support now more than ever, as budgets and public services shrink in these tough economic times. Our fire fighters put themselves in to danger to protect our communities and in return they deserve the necessary equipment and resources to do their job,” said Congressman Harry Teague. “These important programs have provided our fire departments with much needed funding and resources. I am proud to support a bill that will help both create and retain new jobs in communities of all sizes across southern New Mexico.”

New Mexico received over \$1.3 million dollars in AFG grants in 2008, according to the Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which administers both programs reauthorized today. The bill will now move to the Senate for consideration.